

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 417 637

HE 031 089

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TITLE Students in Nova Southeastern University's Shepard Broad Law Center Judge the Inaugural Year of the Evening Program.
INSTITUTION Nova Southeastern Univ., Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Research and Planning.
REPORT NO RR-97-09
PUB DATE 1997-06-00
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Advising; Academic Standards; *College Administration; College Choice; Curriculum Design; *Employment Patterns; *Evening Programs; Geographic Location; Higher Education; Institutional Research; *Law Schools; Law Students; *Legal Education (Professions); Part Time Students; Professional Education; Program Evaluation; Relevance (Education); Reputation; Student Attitudes; Student Recruitment
IDENTIFIERS *Nova Southeastern University FL

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes results of a survey of students in the recently-initiated part-time evening program of Nova Southeastern University (Florida) law school. Respondents included all 54 evening program students enrolled in spring 1997. Results indicate that about half the students hold a job that is either highly or moderately related to their academic program. Location and convenience were the two most frequently cited reasons for choosing the program. Students were generally satisfied with their experiences during the law school's first year with an evening program. Respondents identified a few areas of concern related to either recruitment or academic purposes. Less than 15 percent reported selecting the law school for its academic reputation. The process of assigning students to advisors and the quality of advising seemed to be problematic for this population. The report is in narrative form; tables summarizing data, and the questionnaire are appended. (Contains four references.) (MSE)

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STUDENTS IN NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY'S
SHEPARD BROAD LAW CENTER JUDGE THE
INAUGURAL YEAR OF THE EVENING PROGRAM

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JUNE 1997

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**STUDENTS IN NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY'S SHEPARD BROAD LAW
CENTER JUDGE THE INAUGURAL YEAR OF THE EVENING PROGRAM**

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Report 97-09

June 1997

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nova Southeastern University's Center for the Study of Law was established in 1974. Until 1996, students in the University's Law Center generally enrolled in a three-year program, with instruction usually offered during the day in a standard format for class meetings. However, in Fall 1996, the Law Center offered for the first time a part-time evening program, with classes offered from 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday. The purpose of this study was to provide a sense of how evening program students, at the end of the first academic year, judged this new offering.

In Spring 1997, the Law Center contacted Research and Planning on the need for this study. Survey instruments that had been used by other academic centers were used as a template for the series of questions and statements planned for presentation to students in the Law Center's evening program. After a series of iterations and review by faculty in the Law Center, the survey associated with this study was judged to be appropriate for the Law Center's needs. The survey was administered during class meetings in late-April 1997, during the last weeks of the 1996-97 academic year, and it was completed by all 54 evening program students enrolled at the time of survey administration.

Regarding background information about evening program students, it was found that approximately 50 percent of all evening program law students currently hold a job that is either highly related (29.6 percent) or moderately related (16.7 percent) to their academic program. The remaining 50 percent do not currently work in a position with a high degree of correspondence to the academic program offered by the Law Center. In view of reasons for selecting the University, *Location* (64.8 percent Yes response) and *Convenience* (48.1 percent Yes response) received the most frequent responses from evening program law students.

This report provided evidence that evening program students were generally satisfied with their experiences during the Law Center's first year with an evening program. Responses from students also identified a few areas that may be a concern, either for recruitment or academic purposes. In regard to recruitment, less than 15 percent of all respondents indicated that they decided to attend the University's Law Center due to its *Academic Reputation*. In view of academic progress, the process of assigning students to advisors and the quality of advising seemed to be problematic to evening program students.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Nova Southeastern University was chartered in 1964, and its first class was admitted in 1967. The Center for the Study of Law was established in 1974 (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*; 1997, p. 11), when the University's Fall Term enrollment barely exceeded 2,000 students (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*; 1995, p. 38). At the end of the 1996 Fall Term, the University had grown to an enrollment of 15,739 students (*Nova Southeastern University Weekly Enrollment Report*; January 6, 1997).

Purpose of This Study

Until 1996, students in the University's Law Center enrolled in a three-year program, with instruction generally offered during the day in a standard format for class meetings. However, in Fall 1996 the Law Center offered for the first time a part-time evening program, with most classes offered from 6:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday. The purpose of this study was to provide a sense of how evening program students, at the end of the first academic year, judged this new offering.

METHODOLOGY

In Spring 1997, the Law Center contacted Research and Planning on the need for this study. Survey instruments that had been used by other academic centers were used as a template for the series of questions and statements planned for presentation to students in the Law Center's evening program. After a series of iterations and review by faculty in the Law Center, the attached survey was judged to be appropriate for the Law Center's needs. The survey was administered during class meetings in late-April 1997, during the last weeks of the 1996-97 academic year, and it was completed by 54 evening program students. Because there were 54 evening program students from among the nearly 900 Law Center students (*Nova Southeastern University Weekly Enrollment Report*; April 21, 1997), statistics presented in this report represent a census of all evening program students enrolled at the time of survey administration.

RESULTS

As presented in Table 1, approximately 50 percent of all evening program law students currently hold a job that is either highly related (29.6 percent) or moderately related (16.7 percent) to their academic program. Correspondingly, the remaining 50 percent do not currently work in a position with a high degree of correspondence to the academic program offered by the Law Center.

Responses to the statement "Why did you decide to attend NSU's Law Center?" are identified in Table 2. In parity with responses from other academic centers, *Location* (64.8 percent Yes response) and *Convenience* (48.1 percent Yes response) received the most frequent responses from evening program law students.

Evening program law students were also asked to identify their academic opportunities if they had not attended the University (Table 3). Over 40 percent of all students indicated that they would have attended the University of Miami. However, it should be noted that nearly 50 percent of all evening program law students indicated they would not attend a law school in South Florida if they did not attend NSU.

Survey participants were also asked to react to a series of statements that were worded as quality indicators (Table 4). Mean ratings to these statements ranged from a low of 2.3 (*Quality of advising*) to a high of 4.3 (*Competency of the faculty*). Over 91 percent of all statements (N = 41 of 45) received a rating of 3.0 or greater, indicating satisfaction with the various quality indicators presented to evening program law students.

Evening program law students were additionally asked to respond to a series of statements on diverse topics related to the program and the unique aspects of a law program offered on a part-time basis to students attending classes in the evening. As presented in Table 5, nearly 90 percent of all survey respondents selected an evening program because of family and work obligations.

SUMMARY

The Law Center inaugurated an evening program in 1996/97 for adult students who, due to family and work obligations, are unable to pursue a legal education in a three-year day program format. The survey associated with this report provided ample evidence that the Law Center has indeed met the needs of students paralleling this profile. This report also provided evidence that evening program students were generally satisfied with their experiences during the Law Center's first year with an evening program.

There are a few areas that may be a concern, however, either for recruitment or academic purposes. In regard to recruitment, less than 15 percent of all respondents indicated that they decided to attend the University's Law Center due to its *Academic Reputation*. In view of academic progress, the process of assigning students to advisors and the quality of advising seemed to be problematic to evening program students.

This report should offer a sense of issues related to satisfaction with the Law Center's evening program. An evening law program certainly matches the spirit of the University's Mission Statement, offering student access to professional programs in a variety of formats, times, and locations:

Nova Southeastern University is a dynamic, not-for-profit independent institution dedicated to providing high quality educational programs of distinction from pre-school through the professional and doctoral levels, as well as service to the community. Nova Southeastern University prepares students for lifelong learning and leadership roles in business and the professions. It offers academic programs at times convenient to students, employing innovative delivery systems and rich learning resources on campus and at distant sites. The University fosters inquiry, research, and creative professional activity, by uniting faculty and students in acquiring and applying knowledge in clinical, community, and professional settings.

Approved by the Board of Trustees March 24, 1997

Accordingly, it is recommended that this survey should be reapplied to this cohort of inaugural evening program law students in either 1999 or 2000, to more fully examine this program as students matriculate through the full evening law program.

REFERENCES

Nova Southeastern University Fact Book. (1995). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 95-02.

Nova Southeastern University Fact Book. (1997). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University. Research and Planning Report 97-01.

Weekly Enrollment Report. (January 6, 1997). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University, Research and Planning.

Weekly Enrollment Report. (April 21, 1997). Fort Lauderdale, Florida: Nova Southeastern University, Research and Planning.

TABLES

Table 1

Relation of Current Job to Law Center Program

RESPONSE	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% TOTAL
Highly related	16	29.6
Moderately related	9	16.7
Slightly related	17	31.5
Not at all related	8	14.8
I am currently unemployed	3	5.6
Unidentified	1	1.9
Total	54	100.0

Table 2

Response to the Statement "Why did you decide to attend NSU's Law Center?"

SELECTION	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% TOTAL
Academic Reputation	8	14.8
Admissions Standards	11	20.4
Advice of Counselors and Teachers	2	3.7
Advice of Employer	2	3.7
Advice of Friend	14	25.9
Availability of Scholarships or Financial Aid	1	1.9
Convenience	26	48.1
Cost	2	3.7
Location	35	64.8
Small Class Size	11	20.4
Social Atmosphere	2	3.7
Type of Programs Available	16	29.6
Other	10	18.5

Table 3

Response to the Statement "If you had not attended NSU, would you have attended:"

SELECTION	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% TOTAL
University of Miami	24	44.4
St. Thomas University	3	5.6
Not attend a law school	15	27.8
Other	11	20.4
Unidentified	1	1.9
TOTAL	54	18.5

Note. This statement did not discriminate between the University of Miami's day program and evening program. St. Thomas University does not offer an evening law program.

Table 4
Ratings of Selected Quality Indicators

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Clarity of written admission policies	50	4	4	3.6	0.9
Clarity of written policy on transfer of credit from other institutions	33	3	3	3.5	1.1
Clarity of written completion requirements	46	3	3	3.0	1.3
Clarity of written curricular offerings, as identified in program catalog	47	4	3	3.2	1.1
Program orientation	51	2	3	3.0	1.2
Length of the academic program	52	4	4	3.5	1.0
Length of the individual courses	53	4	4	3.7	0.8
Instructional methods	53	4	4	3.8	1.0
Delivery system	45	4	4	3.5	1.1
Course registration activities	53	4	4	3.5	1.1
Published grading policy	53	4	4	3.4	1.1
Interaction with administrative personnel	50	4	4	3.6	1.1
Competency of the faculty	53	5	4	4.3	0.9
Quality of the learning environment	53	4	4	4.2	0.8
Process for assigning students to advisors	48	3	3	2.6	1.1
Quality of advising	42	3	2	2.3	1.1
Opportunity for intellectual growth	51	4	4	3.7	0.9
Faculty and student interaction	53	4	4	3.7	1.0
Exposure to research scholars	35	3	3	2.9	1.1
Opportunity for peer interaction	50	3	3	3.4	1.0
Clarity of program catalog	46	3	3	3.0	1.1

Table 4 (Continued)
Ratings of Selected Quality Indicators

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Correctness of student records (including transcripts)	48	4	4	3.4	1.2
Availability of library and learning resource materials	53	4	4	4.0	0.9
Adequacy of library and learning resource materials	53	4	4	4.0	1.0
Orientation program relative to library services	52	3	3	2.7	1.2
Training in access to information in electronic and other formats	51	3	3	3.3	1.1
Availability of computing resources	50	4	4	3.5	1.0
Adequacy of computing resources	51	3	3	3.4	1.0
Access to information through technology	52	4	4	3.6	1.0
Instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audio visual and duplicating services)	43	4	3	3.2	1.1
Infusion of information technology into the curricula	50	3	3	3.3	1.2
Provisions for training in the use of technology	51	4	3	3.2	1.1
Student development services	40	3	3	3.2	1.1
Counseling and career development	37	3	3	3.3	1.2
Remedial services available	30	3	3	3.3	1.2
Student government opportunities	47	3	3	3.3	1.0
Student behavior policies and procedures	51	3	3	3.2	1.1

Table 4 (Continued)
Ratings of Selected Quality Indicators

STATEMENT	N	MODE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SD
Financial aid services	47	4	3	3.2	1.2
Health services	19	3	3	3.1	1.0
Alumni services	17	3	3	3.5	0.9
University bookstore	52	4	4	3.5	1.2
Refund policies when withdrawing from courses	22	3	3	3.1	1.3
Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms ...	47	3	3	3.4	1.1
Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment	50	4	4	3.9	0.9
Overall quality of this academic program	53	4	4	3.8	0.8

RATING SCALE

1	Very Dissatisfied	4	Satisfied
2	Dissatisfied	5	Very Satisfied
3	Neutral, Neither Agree nor Disagree	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

Table 5
Response to Miscellaneous Questions

QUESTION	RESPONDENTS	
	N	% YES
Did you decide to attend an evening division law school because of [family and job] obligations?	47	87.0
Do these [family and job] obligations interfere with your ability to prepare adequately for class?	28	51.9
Do you perceive that your religion, ethnicity, and/or gender has in any way had a positive or negative impact on your law school experience?	3	5.6
As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, do you have a disability that in any way influenced your decision to attend an evening division law school?	2	3.7
Do you perceive that evening division law students are being treated materially differently than day division students?	34	63.0
Do you plan to change your career because of your law school education?	39	72.2
Are you satisfied with the Law Center's Student Handbook?	33	61.1

Note. The statistics N and % Yes refer to respondents who marked *Yes*. Each statement had either a *Yes* or *No* listing for respondents to mark.

Nova Southeastern University

SURVEY OF STUDENTS IN THE SHEPARD BROAD LAW CENTER - EVENING DIVISION

Purpose of This Survey:

As part of a continuous process of evaluation of academic programs and student services, the purpose of this survey is to determine your general level of satisfaction with your experience at the University. Results will be used to help the University provide an improved educational experience for future students.

Survey Methodology:

This survey is to be distributed to all Evening Division students. If by chance you receive this survey in multiple classes, please complete this survey only once. Return the survey to the Student Affairs Office.

How closely related is your current job to your academic program at NSU's Law Center?

- _____ Highly related
- _____ Moderately related
- _____ Slightly related
- _____ Not at all related
- _____ I am currently unemployed
- _____ Unknown or unable to answer

Why did you decide to attend NSU's Law Center? Check all selections that apply.

- _____ Academic Reputation
- _____ Admissions Standards
- _____ Advice of Counselors and Teachers
- _____ Advice of Employer
- _____ Advice of Friend
- _____ Availability of Scholarships or Financial Aid
- _____ Convenience
- _____ Cost
- _____ Location
- _____ Small Class Size
- _____ Social Atmosphere
- _____ Type of Programs Available
- _____ Other

If you had not attended NSU, would you have attended:

- _____ University of Miami
- _____ St. Thomas University
- _____ Not attended a law school
- _____ Other

Please review the following rating scale and then mark or circle your reaction to each statement:

RATING SCALE

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Very Dissatisfied | 4 Satisfied |
| 2 Dissatisfied | 5 Very Satisfied |
| 3 Neutral, Neither Agree nor Disagree | NA Not Applicable |
| | U Unknown or Unable to Answer |

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Clarity of written admission policies |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Clarity of written policy on transfer of credit from other institutions |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Clarity of written completion requirements |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Clarity of written curricular offerings, as identified in program catalog |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Program orientation |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Length of the academic program |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Length of the individual courses |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Instructional methods |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Delivery system |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Course registration activities |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Published grading policy |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Interaction with administrative personnel |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Competency of the faculty |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Quality of the learning environment |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Process for assigning students to advisors |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Quality of advising |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Opportunity for intellectual growth |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Faculty and student interaction |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Exposure to research scholars |
| 1 2 3 4 5 NA U | Opportunity for peer interaction |

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1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Clarity of program catalog	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Provisions for training in the use of technology
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Correctness of student records (including transcripts)	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Student development services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Availability of library and learning resource materials	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Counseling and career development
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Adequacy of library and learning resource materials	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Remedial services available
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Orientation program relative to library services	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Student government opportunities
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Training in access to information in electronic and other formats	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Student behavior policies and procedures
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Availability of computing resources	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Financial aid services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Adequacy of computing resources	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Health services
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Access to information through technology	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Alumni affairs
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audio visual and duplicating services)	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	University bookstore
1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Infusion of information technology into the curricula	1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Refund policies when withdrawing from courses
		1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms
		1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment
		1 2 3 4 5 NA U	Overall quality of this academic program

When responding to the following statements, use additional paper if you find that you need more space to complete your answer.

- What additional service(s) would you like to see the library provide? _____
- What day(s) and time-of-day would be best for these additional library services? _____
- Who are the most appropriate personnel to provide these additional library services? _____
- What additional service(s) would you like to see the administration provide? _____
- What day(s) and time-of-day would be best for these additional administrative services? _____
- Who are the most appropriate personnel to provide these additional administrative services? _____
- What do you think is a reasonable per-semester course credit load for an evening division student in the first two semesters? _____
- On what days and during what hours do you think it would be reasonable to offer law school courses to evening students in the first two semesters? _____
- Other than prepare for class, what other family and job obligations do you have during the day? _____
- Yes ____ No ____ Did you decide to attend an evening division law school because of these obligations? _____
- Yes ____ No ____ Do these obligations interfere with your ability to prepare adequately for class? _____
- Yes ____ No ____ Do you perceive that your religion, ethnicity, and/or gender has in any way had a positive or negative impact on your law school experience? _____
What could the school do to provide a more positive experience if you experienced any negative impact? _____
- Yes ____ No ____ As defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, do you have a disability that in any way influenced your decision to attend an evening division law school? _____
Yes ____ No ____ Were your needs relating to this disability met by the Law Center to your satisfaction?
- Yes ____ No ____ Do you perceive that evening division law students are being treated materially differently than day division students?
- Yes ____ No ____ Do you plan to change your career because of your law school education?
- Yes ____ No ____ Are you satisfied with the Law Center's Student Handbook?
What can the Law Center do to revise and improve this resource? _____

Please feel free to offer additional comments that you think may be pertinent.



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